

An Invitation to Rejoice

The pink candle in the Advent wreath marks Gaudete Sunday. It signifies our joy that Christmas is quickly approaching. We hear stories of our faithful ancestors and anticipate the birth of the Christ child. All this happens as we approach the Winter Solstice, the darkest day of the year. In the midst of darkness, we light candles and rejoice for the light among us and the light to come. Although there may be difficult things weighing on our minds, we are invited to see the light in the darkness and rejoice.

In response to Gabriel's message, Mary looks beyond the complexity of her situation, bravely declaring, *"My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord, my spirit rejoices in God my Savior."* Although she feels great uncertainty, she rejoices that God has chosen her for a special task. Like Mary, we should rejoice, for there is always good around us, even during difficult times.

Sorrow and joy are two sides of the same coin, writes Kahlil Gibran in *The Prophet*. *"When you are joyous,"* he says, *"look deep into your heart and you shall find it is only that which has given you sorrow that is giving you joy. When you are sorrowful look again in your heart, and you shall see that in truth you are weeping for that which has been your delight."* Psalm 126 offers consolation: *"Those who go forth weeping shall doubtless come again with rejoicing."* The Paschal Mystery of Christ's death and resurrection unfolds in our lives, as joy and sorrow intermingle and death leads to greater life.

In this third week of Advent, we rejoice in the light while we acknowledge the contrasting shades of sadness. Advent invites us to enter into the dance between joy and sadness where life is lived. When we lose one we love, we mourn their loss, and we celebrate their life. Persons who have a terminal illness may celebrate small victories in treatment, yet they know that in this life the same end waits for all. We have many reasons for rejoicing, and they are always intermingled with sadness, making joy all the more sweet. Advent reveals that joy and sadness are necessary elements of the cycle of life and salvation history, and one cannot exist without the other.